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HINTS  
ON THE IMPROVEMENT  
OF  
THE LITURGY.

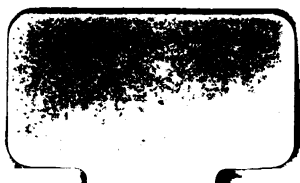
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HINTS



TOWARDS THE IMPROVEMENT

OF

*The Liturgy and Services*

OF

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

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"Faithful are the wounds of a FRIEND."—*Proverbs.*

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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THE writer of the following pages was an attached friend of the Church of England, and devoted a considerable fortune to the support of its foreign and domestic Missions. This fact is stated in order to justify the motto on the title-page.

The Editor feels the grotesqueness of his position in conducting through the press such strictures on the Services of another Church; but the repeated entreaty of a dying friend left him no alternative. He has taken much liberty in abridging these "Hints;" he has not interfered with the writer's opinions.

JAMES HAMILTON.



## INTRODUCTION.

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THE propriety of occasional alterations and improvements in the Liturgy of the Church of England has never been denied by the highest authorities in that Church. In the First and the Second Book of Common Prayer, set forth in the reign of Edward the Sixth, we find the following passage, which has been retained in all succeeding editions :—" And whereas, in this our time, the minds of men be so diverse, that some think it a great matter of conscience to depart from a piece of the least of their ceremonies, they be so addicted to their old customs ; and again, on the other side, some be so new-fangled, that they would innovate all things, and so do

despise the old, that nothing can like them but that is new ; it was thought expedient not so much to have respect how to please and satisfy either of these parties, as how to please God, and profit them both." The Preface to the Liturgy, which has been in use since the year 1662, states that, "It hath been the wisdom of the Church of England, ever since the first compiling of her public Liturgy, to keep the mean between the two extremes, of too much stiffness in refusing, and of too much easiness in admitting, any variation from it. The particular forms of Divine worship, and the rites and ceremonies appointed to be used therein, being things in their own nature indifferent, and alterable, and so acknowledged ; it is but reasonable, that upon weighty and important considerations, according to the various exigency of times and occasions, such changes and alterations should be made therein, as to those that are in place of authority should from time to time seem either necessary or expedient."

The Preface to the American Prayer-Book fully concurs with ours in acknowledging the

necessity and expediency of occasional alterations and amendments in her forms of public worship ; and further states in her preface : “ It is a most invaluable part of that blessed ‘ liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,’ that in his worship, different forms and usages may without offence be allowed, provided the substance of the faith be kept entire ; and that, in every Church, what cannot be clearly determined to belong to doctrine must be referred to discipline, and therefore, by common consent and authority, may be altered, abridged, enlarged, amended, or otherwise disposed of, as may seem most convenient for the edification of the people, ‘ according to the various exigencies of times and occasions.’ When in the course of Divine providence the American States became independent with respect to civil Government, their ecclesiastical independence was necessarily included. The attention of this Church was, in the first place, drawn to those alterations in the Liturgy which became necessary in the prayers for our civil rulers, in consequence of the Revolution. But while

these alterations were in review, before the Convention, they could not but, with gratitude to God, embrace the happy occasion which was offered, (uninfluenced and unrestrained by any worldly authority whatsoever,) to take a further review of the public service, and to establish such other alterations and amendments therein as might be deemed expedient."

The excellent Dr. Porteus, successively Bishop of Chester, 1776, and London, 1781, was an advocate for liturgical reform. The following statement is given in his own words:—"At the close of the year 1772, and the beginning of the next, an attempt was made by myself and a few other clergymen, among whom were Mr. Francis Wollaston, Dr. Percy, now Bishop of Dromore, and Dr. Yorke, now Bishop of Ely, to induce the bishops to promote a review of the Liturgy and Articles, in order to amend in both, but particularly the latter, those parts which all reasonable persons agreed stood in need of amendment. This plan was not in the smallest degree connected with the petitioners at the

Feathers Tavern ; but on the contrary, was meant to counteract that and all similar extravagant projects ; to strengthen and confirm our ecclesiastical establishment ; to repel the attacks which were at that time continually made upon it by its avowed enemies ; —to improve true Christian piety amongst those of our own communion ; and to diminish schism and separation, by bringing over to the National Church all the moderate and well-disposed of other persuasions. On these grounds, we applied in a private and respectful manner to Archbishop Cornwallis, requesting him to signify our wishes, (which we conceived to be the wishes of a very large proportion both of the clergy and the laity,) to the rest of the bishops, that everything might be done, which could be prudently and safely done, to promote these important and salutary purposes. The answer given by the Archbishop, February 11, 1773, was in these words :—‘I have consulted severally my brethren the Bishops, and it is the opinion of the Bench in general, that nothing can in prudence be done in the matter that has been



submitted to our consideration.'” The Bishop’s nephew and biographer justly observes, “that in our established Liturgy there are some redundancies which might be spared, and some changes which might be made with advantage, few will be disposed to deny.”—(*Life of Porteus*, p. 41.)

The present Bishop of London in his Charge to his clergy in 1834, observes: “During the last few years a great variety of projects have been laid before the public for alterations in the discipline and formularies of our Church. So great, indeed, has been the variety, that it has afforded a plausible ground for arguing, that, as it will be impossible to satisfy *all* who are desirous of change, we need not attempt to satisfy *any*. It cannot be necessary that I should point out to you the fallacy of such a mode of arguing. What is reasonable, and salutary, and safe, we should admit, though it may be claimed but by a few. What is extravagant, or hazardous, we should resist, though clamoured for by multitudes. If I were to be asked, what my own opinion is, as to

the expediency of attempting any alteration in the Liturgy, I should be deficient in candour and truth, if I did not acknowledge that I think the Liturgy susceptible of improvement. It would be little short of a miracle were it otherwise ; and I know not why I should be ashamed or reluctant to avow an opinion which was entertained by Sancroft, and Stillingfleet, and Tennison, and Wake, and Secker, and Porteus. I heartily pray that a season may come when the question can be looked at with calmness and candour, and if the recent conduct of the Dissenters forbids us to look forward with any sanguine hope to an extensive comprehension of those who differ from us, that something may be done for the satisfaction of many who are sincere and zealous members of our Church."

Having now stated several authorities in favour of a careful revisal of the Liturgy, the author of this little volume proceeds most respectfully to submit to the serious consideration of the members and friends of the Church of England, the amendments which

seem most needed. They consist chiefly of re-arrangement, simplification, and abridgement. The most important amendments may be made without the addition of a single line. In a work having the humble title of "Hints," no very methodical plan, no long argumentation, no profound researches will be expected. Practical improvement is the sole object of the publication. The "Hints" will, however, be arranged under a few general heads, each of which will form the subject of a separate chapter. No manual of devotion has been more generally or more highly commended than the Liturgy of the Church of England. "Its doctrine," says an ancient ritualist, "is pure and primitive, its ceremonies are few and innocent, its method is exact and natural, its language is significant and perspicacious :"\* and yet under each of these heads or points, it is susceptible of improvement, as the author of these "Hints" hopes will plainly appear in the course of the following pages.

\* Comber on the Liturgy.

## CHAPTER I.

### ABSOLUTION.

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THE power of absolving from sin, claimed by the Church of Rome for her priests, is justly deemed by Protestants an impious assumption of a prerogative exclusively Divine. "But," say the Roman Catholics, "the Church of England claims the same power for her clergy. She also maintains right of priestly absolution." It must be acknowledged, and it is deeply to be lamented, that there are expressions in her Liturgy, which warrant the assertion.

In defence of what is called "The Absolution," in the Anglican morning and evening service, some writers allege that it is not the absolute conveyance from the minister to the people of remission of their sins; but simply a declaration on his part of what is

equally true whether declared by him or not, namely, that "Almighty God pardoneth and absolveth all them who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel ;" and that consequently we may infer he will not pardon the impenitent and unbelieving. But that this Absolution means something more than a mere declaration of the terms on which remission of sins is to be obtained, is evident from the rubric annexed to it, in which it is entitled, "The Absolution, or Remission of Sins ;" and a direction given, not simply that it is to be read, like the rest of the service, but that it is "to be pronounced by the priest alone, standing." Surely, these words convey the idea of an authoritative or judicial sentence. They are generally understood to mean also that no person, except in "priest's order," is authorized to read the Absolution ; so that when a deacon reads the morning and evening service, he uniformly omits the Absolution, and reads in lieu of it one of the collects, though it does not appear there is any rubric or canon requiring him so to do. And it must be

observed that the bishop in ordaining priests, says to them, "Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained:" thus conferring on them, as far as his words can confer, the right and power of absolving the sins of the people. But to deacons he does not address these words; consequently they do not read what is called the "Absolution."

In the American Prayer-book, the "Absolution," in the morning and evening service, is entitled, "The Declaration of Absolution, or Remission of Sins:" but this alteration of the title does not remove all ground of objection to the thing itself. If the whole of the title and rubrical direction in our Prayer-book were omitted, and also the words, "and hath given power and commandment to his ministers to declare and pronounce to his people being penitent the Absolution and remission of their sins," were omitted, the Absolution might readily, and greatly to the relief of tender consciences, be turned into supplication, in the following or some similar manner:—"O most holy and

merciful Lord God, thou desirest not the death of a sinner ; but that he may turn from his wickedness and live. Thou absolvest all them who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe thy holy Gospel. Grant us, we beseech thee, true repentance, and thy Holy Spirit," &c.

Towards the close of the first exhortation in the Communion Service, the minister says : "Let him come to me, that he may receive the benefit of Absolution." In the American Prayer-book, the words, "godly counsel and advice," are substituted for "absolution ;" and in other respects also, the passage is improved. The "Absolution" in the Communion Service seems to have, in some degree, the form of a Benediction, and, in itself, it may perhaps be so understood : but in the rubric prefixed to it, are these words ; "Then shall the priest pronounce the Absolution:" thus giving it an absolatory character. In the American Prayer-book, those words are omitted, and there is no mention of, nor allusion to Absolution. In Wesley's edition

of the Liturgy, the Absolution in the morning and evening service is superseded by the Collect for the twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity; in the Communion Service the Absolution is judiciously turned into prayer or supplication.

The Absolution in the Office for "the Visitation of the Sick" is expressed in stronger terms than in any of the preceding instances, and is therefore more open to severe animadversion. It is a standing reproach to our Church, notwithstanding the various attempts that have been made to excuse or even vindicate it. Some writers say that, like the Absolution in the Morning and Evening Service, it is merely a declaration of the terms on which Almighty God absolves from sin: but this is a strange perversion of words, an unworthy attempt to palliate what is glaringly wrong, to gloss over or disguise what is sinful. It is utterly at variance with the petition in the prayer which immediately follows it: "Impute not to him his former sins." Thus, at one moment the priest professes that he has absolved him from all



altogether, with the rubric which immediately precedes it, would be a relief to all the pious and judicious friends of our Protestant Church, and would obviate one of the principal and most unanswerable charges made against the services of that Church. "It is very well known," says an able writer, "that the greatest of all the objections to the Roman Catholic religion, is its oral confession, and its Absolution given by the priests. What does the Church of England teach? Why, both these, in principle and in practice. In the 'Visitation of the Sick,' it is ordered by the rubric, that the priest shall go to the sick person, who is to be moved by the priest to make a special confession of his sins, after which the priest is to *absolve him* after this sort: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him, of his great mercy forgive thee; and by his authority committed to me, I ABSOLVE THEE FROM ALL THY SINS." Here is oral confession, here is absolution, as complete as ever was heard of in the Church of Rome! There is an evident

discrepancy in this form of Absolution. In the first part of it, the minister declares that "Christ has left power to his Church to absolve all sinners:" in the latter part, the minister himself claims and exercises this power, independently of the Church. But perhaps the vindicator of priestly absolution may say: "Christ has left the power of absolving sinners to the Church: the Church in her Ordination Services, commits this power to all her ordained priests; and thus they have full right to exercise it." Scripture does not authorize them; and reason does not authorize them. What pious Protestant, in the hour of sickness, or on the bed of death, could ask, or even suffer, a mortal man, a fellow-sinner, to pronounce over him these words of awful import,—“I absolve thee from all thy sins?” And we ask, what pious minister of a Protestant Church could take upon himself to pronounce those words? How can he tell what is the nature, the extent, the aggravation, of the sins from which he professes to absolve? For aught he knows, they are unrepented of, unpardoned, unexpiated even by the precious

blood of the Lamb. How can he presume to delude a poor sinner on the very brink of eternity, just going to the bar of the Omniscient Judge, "to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid?" Scripture indeed says, "Confess your faults:" to whom?—to some priest or minister, or even apostle, that he may absolve you? No: "to one another," whether ministers or people; and immediately adds, evidently as a reason or necessary consequence, "and pray for one another." On many occasions, it is our bounden duty as Christians, to confess our sins to our fellow-mortals, in order to make reparation for any wrong we may have done them, to ask their forgiveness for any offence which we may have given them; to warn them, from our own experience, of the evil consequences of sin; to receive from them counsel and instruction; or to obtain their prayers on our behalf. We are not required by Scripture—we are not able—to make a full disclosure of our sins to any human being. They are more in number than the hairs of our head,—many have

escaped our notice,—still more have passed from our remembrance : and perhaps none have been considered and repented of as they ought to be. Nor can we at any moment fully lay open our heart to any one of our fellow-mortals, even to the most wise and pious and trustworthy minister of Christ. Only HE who made the heart, can truly know it,—can discern all its weakness and sinfulness,—all its wants and desires. But, blessed be our God, he has provided a remedy for all its diseases, a balm for all its wounds. He has opened a fountain for sin and uncleanness, even the precious and infinitely meritorious blood of his eternal Son, in which all who will may wash, and be clean. Our sins shall no more appear against us. They shall be cast, as it were, into the depths of the sea. A robe of righteousness shall cover our nakedness and deformity. The Judge himself shall be our friend and advocate. We shall need no man to absolve us,—to Him we shall commit our cause. He is all-sufficient to save us.

In the American Prayer-book, the Absolution in the Visitation Service is omitted. Wesley, in his edition of the Liturgy leaves out the whole of the Service.

## CHAPTER II.

### STATE PRAYERS.

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THE Apostle Paul directs, (1 Timothy ii. 1, 2,) that "supplications, prayers, and intercessions, be made for kings." But surely, one short, comprehensive prayer for the sovereign and the royal family, during the course of morning and evening service, would be more reverent to the King of kings, more respectful to the persons for whom prayer is offered, and more congenial to their feelings, than a vain multiplication of words. In the service on Sunday mornings, we hear two if not three different prayers for the king or queen, and in cathedrals usually four.

In the prayer for the Parliament, the well-known words, "our most religious and gracious king or queen," have called forth, in many quarters, just and severe animad-

version. The epithet "most gracious," is applied, in the very same sentence, both to Almighty God and to an earthly sovereign. Surely, "most religious and gracious," are not the terms in which supplication should be offered up for any human being, however exalted in rank or character. To hear these words uttered in the house of our God, particularly by the lips of a pious and venerated minister, is indescribably painful. If these words were pointed out, in their true light, to our ingenuous and much-loved Sovereign, she would, we doubt not, fully acknowledge the impropriety of them, and recommend the entire omission of them ; and there is every reason to believe that if any of Her immediate predecessors had been consulted respecting these words, they would have come to the same conclusion. It is said that George III. erased the words from his own Prayer-book, and, in lieu of them, wrote in the margin, "a miserable sinner." This prayer did not originally form part of our Reformed English Liturgy, it was added at the revisal, on the Restoration of Charles II. ; consequently, it

referred, primarily, to that dissolute monarch, though it must be acknowledged that, in the first instance, the prayer was inserted in the Liturgy or Service-book, which, in the reign of Charles I., was prepared for Scotland, and was injudiciously and vainly attempted to be forced on that nation. Since the Restoration, the epithet "most religious" has been applied indiscriminately to all our succeeding monarchs. It would seem, according to the doctrine or opinion of our Church, that all who ascend the throne of Great Britain, whatever their previous life and character, become instantaneously, "most religious" and "most gracious." Some writers have attempted to justify the use of these words, by a miserable subterfuge or sophism ; alleging that they are applicable to the sovereign, not in his or her private character, but merely as the supreme head of the Anglican Church ; and in that capacity, possessing a sacred office, he or she must necessarily be esteemed religious. "After the Savoy Conference," says Bishop Burnet, "a Collect was drawn up for the





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Parliament, in which a new epithet was added to the king's title, that gave great offence, and occasioned much indecent railery ; he was styled our most religious king. It was not easy to give a proper sense to this, and to make it go down well ; since, whatever the signification of *religious* might be in the Latin, as importing the sacredness of the king's person, yet in the English language it bore a signification that was in no way applicable to the king." The Commissioners appointed, in 1688-9, by William III. to revise the Liturgy and Canons, recommended that all high titles of the king or queen should be omitted, and the word, "sovereign," substituted.

Archdeacon Paley, in his "Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy," justly observes : "The *state prayers* in our Liturgy should be fewer and shorter. The state style likewise seems unseasonably introduced into the prayers, as ill according with that annihilation of human greatness, of which every act that carries the mind to God, presents the idea."

## CHAPTER III.

### THE CREEDS.

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THE creed falsely called the Apostles', and incorrectly attributed to them, holds a distinguished place in the services of the Anglican Church. It is generally taught at a very early age, to the children connected with that Church, and daily repeated by them, as part of their morning and evening devotions : but with so little regard to its meaning, that it is very frequently, if not usually, considered and spoken of as a prayer, by members of that Church, long after they have passed childhood. In the Visitation of the Sick, this creed receives the high but unmerited title of "The Articles of the Faith : " in the Catechism, it is spoken of as, "all the Articles of the Christian Faith." It is worthy of observation that the faith which the Baptismal Ser-

vices require previous to baptism, and the faith respecting which the sick and dying are examined or questioned, is simply belief in all the articles of this creed; nothing being said of justifying faith, or of spiritual renovation. And indeed many persons are so ignorant or unmindful of Scripture, that they are fully convinced, that all which is necessary to be believed for salvation, is comprised in "the Apostles' Creed." But so far is this creed from expressing the principles of the orthodox Christian faith, that by a recent Socinian writer of considerable celebrity, it is denominated "Unitarian." It gives indeed a brief history of the Founder of our religion, but not a summary of Christian doctrine. It tells us of the death of Christ, but it does not tell us for whom, or for what cause, he suffered death. "It maintains," says Mr. Ryland,\* "a deep and dead silence on the two grand fundamental doctrines of Revelation,—original sin, and the atonement. To the former of these, no one

\* "Church Reform," p. 159.

can possibly contend that it contains the shadow of an allusion. To the latter, it may possibly be pleaded that a reference is made by the mention of the passion and death of Christ. But what is the naked fact? 'He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried;' and this is equally true of the thieves who were crucified with him. In each instance, it is the bare recital of an historical fact, and believed, not merely by the Socinian, but by the Mahometan, and even by the sceptic, who finds a similar record in the well-known and undisputed passage of Tacitus. To this may be added the unaccountable fact that, so far is this creed from connecting the atonement with the death of Christ, that its third division mentions the forgiveness of sins, in absolute disjunction from his death."

The assertion in this creed, and also in the Athanasian, that Christ "descended into hell," has given rise to much warm and unprofitable controversy, both in ancient and modern times. In the Nicene Creed, it is very properly omitted. Bishop Tomline, in

his "Christian Theology," (vol. ii. p. 251,) says, "Christ's descent into hell or Hades, is not mentioned in the abstracts of Christian faith, which the early fathers have left us : nor is it in any of those numerous creeds which were composed by the councils of the fourth century, except that which was agreed to at Arimini, in the year 359. In the beginning of the fifth century, the Church at Aquileia, as we learn from Ruffinus, used the corresponding expression, *descendit ad inferna*, but at the same time he informs us, that there was no similar article in the creeds then used, either at Rome, or in the Eastern Churches. In the sixth century this article was admitted into many creeds, and it was confirmed by the Fourth Council of Toledo, 633." Bishop Pearson observes in his "Exposition of the Creed," (pp. 226, 227,) that, "In the Aquileian Creed, where the article was first expressed, there was no mention of Christ's burial ;—the Athanasian Creed has the descent to hell, but not the sepulture ; there is no question but the observation of Ruffinus was most true, that

though the Roman and Oriental Creeds had not the words, (respecting the descent into hell,) yet they had the sense of them in the word *buried*. It appeareth, therefore, that the first intention of putting these words in the Creed, was only to express the burial of our Saviour, or the descent of his body into the grave."

The American Prayer-book directs that "any Churches may omit the words, 'He descended into hell,' or may, instead of them, use the words, 'he went into the place of departed spirits,' which are considered as words of the same meaning:" the substitution seems, however, perfectly unnecessary, and is not supported by scriptural authority.

#### ATHANASIAN CREED.

This creed undoubtedly derives its name from Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria: but, as appears from the concurrent testimony of various authors, it was not written till long after his death. It appears probable that this creed was composed in the Latin language, towards the close of the fifth century, by an



unknown writer. Some authors say that it was not received into the offices of the Church till about the tenth century ; others say, still later, and that it got into use without any public authority, and even in direct opposition to the decree of the General Council of Ephesus, which forbade the introduction of any new creed. Its merit or demerit does not, however, depend on its antiquity, nor yet on the name, the character, or the station of the author, but on its conformity or nonconformity to Scripture. "That which is called the Creed of Athanasius," says Bishop Tomline,\* "was certainly not written by that father : it is not found in his works, nor is it probable that he should himself compose a creed, as he and all the orthodox divines of those times constantly refer to the Nicene Creed as the standard of their faith. Indeed the Athanasian Creed was never heard of till the sixth century, above a hundred years after the death of Athanasius. It had never the sanction of any general council, and it is doubtful whether it was ever admitted into

\* "Elements of Theology," vol. ii., p. 97.

the Eastern Church. It would, perhaps, have been well, if divines, in treating of this awful and mysterious subject, (the doctrine of the Trinity,) had confined themselves to the expressions of Scripture : for the moment we begin to explain it, beyond the written Word of God, we plunge ourselves into inexplicable difficulties. And how can it be otherwise ? Is it to be expected that our finite understandings should be competent to the full comprehension of the nature and properties of an Infinite Being ? We know not the essence of our own mind, nor the precise distinction of its several faculties ; and why then should we hope to comprehend the personal characters which exist in the Godhead ? When we attempt to investigate the nature of the Deity, whose existence is commensurate with eternity, by whose power the universe was created, and by whose wisdom it is governed ; whose presence fills all space, and whose knowledge extends to the thoughts of every man in every age, and to the events of all places, past, present, and to come : the mind is quickly lost in the vastness of these ideas,

and unable to find any sure guide to direct its progress : it becomes, at every step, more bewildered and entangled in the endless mazes of metaphysical abstraction."

Archbishop Tillotson, writing to Bishop Burnet, respecting that prelate's "Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles," says, "The account given of Athanasius's Creed seems to me in no wise satisfactory." And he adds, in reference to that creed, "I wish we were well rid of it ;" a sentiment or wish in which all the real and enlightened friends of the Church of England will heartily concur. It is stated by the authors of "Observations on a Petition for the Revision of the Liturgy, presented to the House of Lords, May 26, 1840:" "There is a large number of excellent witnesses, of high authority in our Church, including four Archbishops of Canterbury, against the use of the Athanasian Creed." \* It has been suggested that this Creed should be omitted in the Liturgy, and transferred, either wholly or in part, to the "Articles of Religion." The entire relin-

\* "Hull's Petition," p. 9.

quishment of it would be far preferable. It is so seldom read in our churches, only thirteen times in the year, that the discontinuance of it, would scarcely ever be noticed by the bulk of our church-going people ; and to the judicious and spiritually-minded among them, it would afford great relief and heart-felt satisfaction. This creed, whenever it is read in our churches, excites an evident and a painful sensation. It comes in abruptly, unconnected with anything that precedes or follows ; and is very different, both in matter and manner, from the rest of the Liturgy. It shocks the feelings and the judgment of pious and enlightened persons ; disgusts and alienates others ; and affords to the opponents of our Church just cause of censure and reproach. It exhibits, indeed, the sublime mysteries of revelation ; but encumbered with the idle jargon and ponderous conceits of man. It makes or represents the path of salvation more narrow, obscure, and intricate, than it really is according to Scripture. Through faith only, Scripture assures us, we can obtain salvation.

But saving faith does not extend to all the particulars contained in this creed ; most of which are not even mentioned in Scripture.

“My objection to this creed,” says Mr. Ryland,\* “is not that it contains heresy, but that it is so much below the dignity and importance of its subject. It is a dry, abstract, unapplied series of positions about the Trinity ; a theory without an explicit reference to practical utility. It offends no man’s pride by annihilating self-righteousness before the cross ; and offers no obstacle to the path of the libertine by requiring personal holiness. One lamentable result of this is, that speculative theologians feel well satisfied with their supposed belief in a Triune Deity, though all the while they know nothing of the Father reconciled, through the Son, by the Holy Ghost.” Let us hear Bishop Taylor ; “He who goes about to speak of the mysterious Trinity, and does it by words and names of man’s invention, may amuse himself, and build tabernacles in his head, and talk something, he knows not what : but

\* “Church Reform,” p. 165.

the good man, who feels the power of the Father, and to whom, (1 Cor. i. 30,) the Son is become wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ; to whom God hath communicated the Holy Ghost the Comforter ; this man, though he understands nothing of what is unintelligible, yet he alone truly understands the mysteriousness of the Holy Trinity."

The damnatory clauses in this creed are liable to great and insuperable objection. They are utterly inconsistent with Scripture ; and with the generally mild tenor of the English Liturgy. They obviously mean, and notwithstanding all the pains taken by some ingenious writers to prove the contrary, they can only mean, that every person who denies or who does not yield full assent to every assertion in this creed "shall perish everlastingly." On account of these clauses, some clergymen disuse the creed altogether ; others have entered a formal protest against it ; and not a few, though constrained by various motives, to read it in conformity to the rubric, do it with pain and sad mis-

givings, and much to the discomfort of the enlightened and pious part of their congregation. The Greek Church rejects the Twenty-third Article, in this creed, the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, and therefore clearly comes under the sentence of condemnation of this creed ; as well as all others who are either unacquainted with the creed, or who conscientiously reject it.

Many writers, including some eminent prelates, condemn these clauses, wholly and unreservedly. Archbishop Secker thought it, "a pity they had not been originally omitted." \* Bishop Jeremy Taylor † declares that they are extrinsic and accidental to the creed ; and that he dares not hold them. "Nothing," says he, "in the symbol of Athanasius, but damnation, and perishing everlastingly, unless the Article of the Trinity be believed, as it is there with curiosity and minute particularities explained. If it were considered concerning Athanasius'

\* Works, vol. vi. p. 227.

† Works, vol. vii. pp. 494, 491, 493.

Creed, how many people understand it not, how contrary to natural reason it seems, how little the Scripture says of those curiosities of explication; it had not been amiss if the final judgment had been left to Jesus Christ, for he is appointed Judge of all the world, and he shall judge the people righteously, for he knows every truth, the degree of every necessity, and all the excuses that do lessen, or take away, the nature or malice of a crime. And, indeed, to me it seems very hard to put uncharitableness into the Creed, and so to make it become an article of faith."

The author of a work entitled, "Church Reform, by a Churchman," pp. 125—129, said to be Archdeacon Berens, recommends "the *total removal* from the Athanasian Creed of the two harshest of those clauses; which are commonly called the damnatory clauses; that is, the second and concluding clause. I am convinced," he says, "that the harsh complexion of those two clauses, has acted with a repulsive force; and has been unfavourable to the acceptation of the doctrines themselves, which they were intended to guard. I am



satisfied that those clauses have materially contributed towards keeping back from the ministry of the Church many men, who would have adorned it by their character, and by their talents ; that they are seldom pronounced, when they occur in the public services, without a *secret revulsion* in both minister and people ; and that they are a burthen on the consciences of very many of those young men, who, in our Universities, are called upon to subscribe to the Prayer-book and the Thirty-nine Articles." It has been repeatedly asserted in print, that our late revered monarch, George III., showed a marked dislike to the public use of the Athanasian Creed. In a petition for the revision of the Liturgy presented to the House of Lords, on the 26th of May, 1840, by the Archbishop of Dublin, from several members of the United Church of England and Ireland, is the following passage :—  
"Athanasius' Creed is not generally understood by the people ; and is drawn up in a way which leads many to believe that the damnatory clauses are part of the Catholic

faith ; while each of the damnatory clauses in itself is such as to require an explanation inconsistent with the words, when taken in their plain sense, and common force." The Bishop of Norwich,\* in his Notes (p. 29) on the speech delivered by him in the House of Lords, on occasion of that Petition being presented, says :—"Let me ask deliberately, and solemnly, whether there is a single clergyman living, who believes that every individual not keeping 'whole and undefiled the Catholic faith,' as it is minutely defined and analysed in the Athanasian Creed, 'without doubt shall perish everlastingly : ' be it observed, the creed literally understood, makes no allowances, no distinctions, but unconditionally and unequivocally asserts that 'all who receive it not, are doomed to irretrievable perdition.'" The Bishop of Lincoln, in his speech, in the House of Lords, on that occasion, said :—"I rise at the request of one of the subscribers to the petition now before your Lordships, Mr. Wodehouse, a prebendary of

\* The late Dr. Stanley.—Ed.

Norwich. It is now about twelve years since Mr. Wodehouse first communicated to me the difficulties which he felt with respect to certain parts of the Athanasian Creed, and certain passages in the Liturgy. He explained to me his views of those passages ; and I stated to him, that if a candidate for ordination were to inform me that he entertained those views, I should not feel that they constituted any obstacle to his admission into orders. I believe that a similar opinion was given him by other prelates whom he consulted." \*

Of the creeds collectively, it may justly be said, they are not only erroneous on some points, but deficient on many others. None of them contains any acknowledgment of the Divine inspiration and authority of Scripture ; of the guilt and apostasy of man ; of the sovereignty of grace ; of justification, regeneration, and sanctification ; the necessity

\* Observations on a Petition for the revision of the Liturgy, by John and William Winstanley Hull, pp. 72, 57.

of good works, or of righteous and holy living, as the result, the test, and evidence, of saving faith. "The three creeds," says a recent writer in the "Eclectic Review,"\* "are unscriptural. In the words of our Lord, or the writings of his apostles, we never meet with such cold stringing together of doctrines. The same truths, when presented to us in the Scriptures, are presented practically, not dogmatically. And it is surely unpardonable that while the Protestant Church of England has three creeds, that great truth, which Luther declared to be the basis of the Reformation, should not find a place in either of them. The Church of England has protested against the Church of Rome, and has nevertheless adopted her creeds, creeds which exclude what the Reformers termed the *articulum stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ*, and also the grand truth which our Lord first taught to Nicodemus. As a profession of a believer's faith, these symbols are not only *jejune*, but wretchedly incomplete ;

\* Vol. xxiv., p. 504.

omitting entirely the two doctrines, through which alone all that they contain is of any use or interest to us as sinners, viz., justification and the new birth."

## CHAPTER IV.

### LESSONS AND CALENDAR.

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ATTENDANCE at church is, by most persons, chiefly confined to the Sabbath-day. It is, therefore, highly desirable that those portions of Scripture should be read in the church, on that day, which bear most immediately on the essential points of the Christian religion, and that the chapters selected for Sunday reading in the church, should be wholly independent of those for week days. They should give, in a regular and continued series, the origin and progress of the Christian Dispensation, as revealed in Holy Writ, together with a judicious compendium of Christian doctrine and Christian principles.

Whately justly reprobates, "the commonly prevailing practice of reading the Scripture histories irregularly; and in detached frag-

ments, taken indiscriminately and without any fixed object, out of different books. The whole of the New Testament is read in this irregular mode, in the second lessons appointed in our service, as these are appointed [or rather taken] in reference to the day of the month only; and it is consequently a matter of chance which of them shall fall on Sunday. This is one of the imperfections which a Church Government, if we had one, would not fail to remedy." (Whately's [Archbishop] "Two Essays on the Kingdom of Christ," p. 5.)

When a sermon is preached for any benevolent or religious institution, or for any special purpose of a public nature, it is surely desirable that the officiating minister should have liberty to select such chapters as he deems most adapted to the object in view, and most in unison with the subject of the sermon or lecture. It not unfrequently happens that, when a sermon is to be preached on some special occasion, the lessons appointed for the day on which it occurs, are inappropriate, if not painfully

irrelevant. The American Prayer-book, though it has, like ours, fixed tables of lessons, yet admits some modification ; and says :—"On days of fasting and thanksgiving, appointed either by the civil or ecclesiastical authority, the minister may appoint such psalms and chapters as he shall think fit, unless any shall have been appointed by the ecclesiastical authority, in a service set out for the occasion. And the same discretion of choice is allowed on occasions of ecclesiastical conventions, and those of charitable collections." Many persons, however, are of opinion, in which Archdeacon Paley seems fully to concur, that on all occasions officiating ministers or clergymen should be authorized or at liberty to choose or select the chapters and psalms to be read in their respective churches. If this were the case, much benefit would doubtless accrue, both to the congregation and to the minister himself in the exercise of his ministry. The lessons would come with greater force and energy when known to be the deliberate choice of the minister for the benefit of his

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people, at that particular time. Some of the chapters in the present list for Sunday service, might be read, with others of equal or greater importance. The constant attender at church on Sundays would not then be wearied or disgusted with hearing the same chapter, on the same Sunday, in every or a long course of succeeding years, to the entire exclusion of all others: consequently his knowledge of Scripture, and his interest in hearing it read, and his conviction of his own personal concern in it, could scarcely fail to be greatly enlarged. Some ministers, if liberty of selection were left to them, would probably read such chapters, or parts of chapters, from the Old or New Testaments, as they judged most adapted to the sermon which they were about to preach, or to particular circumstances or occasions, respecting the Church, the country, or the congregation. Others would read in chronological order or in a regular connected series.

Notwithstanding the objections to the Apocrypha which have long been made, but more particularly of late, by enlightened

Protestants of every denomination, we still, not unfrequently, find these books bound up in our Bibles, and placed between the Old and New Testament; and what is more to be regretted, we find that many chapters from these books are appointed to be read in the public services of our Church—thus leading uninformed persons to suppose that those books have the same authority and the same sanction as inspired Scripture. They are, it is said, valuable as ancient writings, and they throw considerable light on the history and manners of the times and countries in which they were written. And it must be acknowledged, they contain some important moral lessons, (and this may be said of some heathen writings,) though perhaps none which are not found in genuine Scripture, and expressed with more simplicity and force. “We hold not the Apocrypha for sacred,” says Hooker, “as we do the Holy Scripture, but for human composition, the subjects whereof are sundry disciplines.” The Sixth Article of the Church of England, after enumerating all

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the canonical books of the Old Testament, adds: "The other books, as Hierome saith, the Church doth read, for example of life, and instruction of manners, but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine." In accordance with this Article, all marginal and other references to the Apocrypha should be scrupulously avoided in all editions of the Bible.

Very inconsistently with the Sixth Article, above quoted, our Prayer-book acknowledges the Apocrypha as Holy Scripture; for the first of the rubrics concerning "the order how Holy Scripture is appointed to be read," says: "The Old Testament is appointed for the first lessons at morning and evening prayer," and those lessons are in numerous instances taken from the Apocrypha; therefore, the Apocrypha is evidently considered as part of the Old Testament. The American Prayer-book, like ours, retains that rubric, and, in the table of lessons for holidays, admits several chapters from Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, but, unlike ours, wholly rejects or omits the book of Tobit, and all

the other apocryphal books, from the table of lessons in the calendar for every day of the year ; and thus quietly but effectually gets rid of a great mass of absurd and objectionable matter.

The reading of the Apocrypha in the public services of our Church, as the Word of God, is highly objectionable, and greatly to be regretted. It is a great blemish in our Liturgy, which all its true friends would wish to see speedily removed. The Commissioners appointed in 1689, for the revision of the Liturgy, and other purposes connected with the better ordering of our Church, recommended that all "the Apocryphal Lessons should be thrown out, and likewise all those of the Old Testament which are too natural, and others appointed in their stead by a new calendar ;" which they had fully settled, and out of which they had omitted all the legendary saints' days, and others not directly referred to in the Service-book.\*

The calendar which includes the table of lessons to be read throughout the year,

\* See Cox, p. 39, and Riland's Brit. Lit.

and the various tables which follow it, encumber and disfigure our Prayer-book. A few lines would convey all the information those tables contain which is of any general use or interest. The enumeration of feasts, vigils, fasts, and days of abstinence, amounting altogether to about 150, all of which, except Christmas-day and Good Friday, are no longer generally observed in our nation and even in our Church, can answer no good purpose. The American Prayer-book omits the vigils. That Fridays are appointed or enumerated among days of fasting or abstinence in our Prayer-book, was occasioned, it is said, from the desire of Queen Elizabeth to promote the consumption of fish, in order to encourage the fisheries. Wicliff, the great forerunner of the English Reformation, and who in some points went further in adherence to scriptural truth than his immediate successors, so far conformed to the usage of the Church as to keep the festivals of the saints, plainly intimates that it might be as well, if the festivals of human worthies were altogether abolished, so that men might

celebrate the festival of Jesus Christ alone, and the devotion of his people might cease to be parcelled out among his members. He held prudent and measurable fasting to be salutary. But abstinence from flesh, only to indulge in fish, he derides as *fool-fasting*, and as nothing better than another form of gluttony; and fasting beyond the powers of nature, he censures as a mistaken and presumptuous emulation of Elias or Christ.\* Scripture tells us that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink," not a system of formal ordinances, or of servile abstinence from ordinary occupations and enjoyments, "but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

The registry of saints' days or of festivals observed in the dark ages, and the legendary names and allusions which the calendar contains, are surely a disgrace to our Prayer-book. They were not transmitted to us by our early Reformers. It is painful to add

\* "Life of Wicliffe," by C. W. Le Bas, pp. 326 and 345.

they were introduced at the revisal in 1560, or in the first year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, though the Commissioners appointed by her to revise the Liturgy recommended that all holydays should be abrogated, except Sundays, and the principal feasts of Christ.\* In the First Book of Edward, no names of any persons are inserted in the calendar, except of those for whom commemorative services are appointed; in the Second Book, (unaccountably indeed, and very inconsistently with its general advancement in Protestantism,) there are three, S. George, S. Lawrence, and S. Clement. The following, among many others in our present Prayer-book, are, to say the least, very objectionable or extraordinary entries in the Prayer-book of a professedly reformed Protestant Church:—"Conception of Virgin Mary, Dec. 1; Nativity of Virgin Mary,

\* See Benson, p. 39; and "Cardwell's Conferences," p. 43; also 18mo., ditto, 1846, London. Printed and sold by Eyre and Spottiswoode, printers to the Queen.

**Sept. 8 ; Visitation of Virgin Mary, July 2 ;  
Name of Jesus, Aug. 7 ; Invention of the  
Cross, May 5 ; Holy Cross-day, Sept. 14 ;  
Ash Wednesday ; Lucian, P. and M., Jan. 8 ;  
Hilary, B. and C., Jan. 13 ; Prisca, V. and  
M., Jan. 18 ; Fabian, B. and M., Jan. 20 ;  
Vincent, M., Jan. 22 ; Blasius, Bp. and  
Martyr, Feb. 3 ; Agatha, Virg. and Mart.,  
Feb. 5 ; Valentine, Bp. and Mart., Feb. 14 ;  
Chad., Bp. of L., March 2 ; Perpetua, M.,  
March 7 ; S. Ambrose, Bp., April 10 ; Alph.,  
Archbp., April 19 ; S. George, April 23 ; S.  
John Evange Port. Lat., May 6 ; Dunstan,  
A.B. ; May 19 ; Ven. Bede, Pr., May 27 ;  
Boniface, B. M., June 5 ; Tr. of Edw. King of  
West Sax., June 20 ; Tr. of Mart., B., July  
4 ; Swithin, B., Tr., July 15 ; S. Mary  
Magd., July 22 ; S. Anne, July 26 ; S.  
Lawrence, M., Aug. 10 ; S. Augustin, B.,  
Aug. 28 ; Giles, Ab. and C., Sept. 1 ; Enur-  
chus, B., Sept. 7 ; S. Jerome, C. D., Sept.  
30 ; Remigius, Bp., Oct. 1 ; S. Denys, B.  
M., Oct. 9 ; Transl. of King Edw. Conf.,  
Oct. 13 ; Crispin, Mart., Oct. 25 ; O. Sa-**



pientia, Dec. 16." These are surely relics or remnants of an ancient superstition, which, it is to be hoped, will never again be permitted to darken our land. They should be unsparingly expunged.

## CHAPTER V.

### MARRIAGE SERVICE.

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THE introduction to this Office is liable to much objection on the score of indelicacy. The omission of a few passages in it would obviate this objection, rendering the introduction the same as in the American Prayer-book : "Dearly-beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this congregation, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony : which is an estate instituted of God, and is commended by St. Paul as honourable in all men : and therefore it is not by any to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly ; but reverently, discreetly, soberly, and in the fear of God. Into this holy estate these two persons present come now to be joined. If any man can show just cause why they may not

lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace."

The declaration of the bridegroom, "With my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow," is irreconcilable with Scripture, with the Divine institution of marriage, and with the established order of society. Being dictated by the minister, and made in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, it assumes the character of a solemn mockery. To say that the word worship is used agreeably to its ancient though now obsolete sense, and signifies merely honour, reverence, or regard; and that I "endow thee with all my worldly goods," means only "I endow thee with an interest or a share or concern in all my worldly goods," is a miserable subterfuge. If a foreigner, but more particularly a Pagan, were to come into our Church at the celebration of the Marriage Service or rite, would he not be astounded to hear an Englishman bind himself by a solemn vow that he will worship his wife, and will give her all his worldly goods?

## CHAPTER VI.

### COMMUNION OF THE SICK,

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WE condemn the Roman Catholics because they believe that if in their last hour, they obtain from their priest, absolution, and extreme unction, they shall assuredly go to heaven. But, it may be asked, do not many ignorant and unawakened Protestants, entertain an equally absurd and impious notion in regard to the sacramental bread and wine ?

The administration of the Lord's Supper to sick or dying persons, but especially to condemned criminals previous to their execution, without any regard to the state of their minds, may justly be ranked among superstitious practices of a very malignant nature : leading poor sinners, even in the most solemn and important hours of their

lives, to rest their hopes of final forgiveness and acceptance with God, not on his own free grace and mercy, flowing through the atoning blood and the advocacy of Jesus ; but on the performance of an outward act, dependent solely on the will of man. That any external observance, any rite or ceremony, can wash away or obliterate one sin, far less the sins of a whole life, and secure salvation to the immortal soul, is a dreadful delusion ; a heresy destroying the very root of Christianity. The public journals inform us that a wretched man, who was executed at Salisbury, in 1841, for the murder of his wife, died in a very hardened and impenitent state of mind, and that he would not suffer the Lord's Supper to be administered to him, nor the Burial Service to be read as he went to his execution ; showing, on this point, better judgment, if not more conscientiousness, than those who offered to him these rites.

In some cases, dying persons themselves, and in many others their friends, are earnestly desirous that they should receive the Lord's Supper ; considering it as a seal of absolution ;

an earnest of pardon and peace in the world to come ; a viaticum, a sure preparation for heaven ; and having a deep impression on their minds, that all who depart this life without partaking of it are excluded from salvation.

Other dying persons, and their living friends, consider the receiving of the Lord's Supper, in their last hours, merely as a decent form or ceremony befitting their condition, and conformable to the general practice among respectable people. They are willing to die as they have lived, attentive only to outward observances ; to which, with complete indifference, or with confidence still more culpable, they commit to the last all the concerns of their immortal souls, and all their interests in the world to come. They send for, or suffer others to send for, the minister of the parish ; not to converse with him ; not to question him on the scriptural terms of salvation ; not to pray for them or with them, that they may obtain mercy at the throne of grace ; but simply to give them, in proper form, and with all due

solemnity, a morsel of bread, and a drop of wine. When that is done, they desire no further intercourse with him ; and, as far as appears from outward circumstances, they dismiss from their minds all further thought on these matters ; retaining, it is to be feared, the vague, confused idea, often expressed by them during life, that the soul dies with the body, or passes into some unknown state of felicity, where, through the infinite mercy of God, all, whether good, bad, or indifferent, are admitted.

Some, in their dying hours, do not go even so far as to desire the administration of the Lord's Supper. They satisfy themselves with sending, usually at the instigation or request of their friends, for "the parson to pray for them," that is, to read to them some prayers, out of the Prayer-book, (for that is all they desire,) whether adapted to their state or not, is to them immaterial. To these prayers, they attribute some kind of unknown efficacy ; and yield a cold and formal assent. Then, like the others, mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, they die ;

and give no sign, leave no testimony, of Christian faith or Christian hope.

"It is a dangerous abuse of this sacrament," says Baxter, in his "Christian Directory," "to receive it, that you may be pardoned, or sanctified, or saved, barely by the work done, or by the outward exercise alone ; while you strive not with your own hearts, to stir them up to love, or faith, or obedience, by the means that are before you ; as if God would pardon and save you, for eating so much bread, and drinking so much wine ; or, as if this sacrament conveyed grace, like as charms are supposed to work, by saying over so many words."

The sentiments of two eminent prelates fully coincide with those of the Nonconformist Baxter, on the important point. Bishop Burnet, in his "Abridged History of the Reformation," (book ii. p. 63,) says : "It is too gross a relic of the worst part of Popery, if any imagine that after an ill life, some sudden sorrow for sin, with a hasty absolution, and the sacrament, will be a passport to heaven ; since the mercies of



God in Christ are offered in the Gospel, only to those who truly believe, sincerely repent, and change the course of their lives." Dr. Sumner, Bishop of Chester,\* in the Appendix to his Primary Charge, observes : "It might tend to remove a remnant of Popery, which still exists too generally, if this sacrament were never urged upon the sick, or even administered to them, without much consideration, unless they have been previously communicants. The withholding of it will seldom be felt as a serious evil, unless the object of the sacrament itself is misunderstood ; and if its object is misunderstood, it is far better that it should be withheld. The temporary consolation of which a few, who may really be entitled to such consolation, will thus be deprived, is of far less consequence, than the perpetuation of an error and abuse, which there is reason to fear has been the ruin of multitudes."

The rubrics connected with the Office for the "Communion of the Sick," particularly in the following passages, favour, in some de-

\* Now Archbishop of Canterbury.—ED.

gree, the delusive views too commonly entertained respecting the receiving of the Lord's Supper. "Forasmuch as all mortal men be subject to many sudden perils, diseases, and sicknesses, and ever uncertain what time they shall depart out of this life ; therefore, to the intent they may be always in a readiness to die, whensoever it shall please Almighty God to call them, the curates shall diligently from time to time, (but especially in the time of pestilence, or other infectious sickness,) exhort their parishioners to the often receiving of the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ, when it shall be publicly administered in the church ; that so doing they may, in case of sudden visitation, have the less cause to be disquieted for lack of the same." "But if a man, either by reason of extremity of sickness, or for want of warning in due time to the curate, or for lack of company to receive with him, or by any other just impediment, do not receive the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, the curate shall instruct him, that if he do truly repent him

of his sins, and stedfastly believe that Jesus Christ hath suffered death upon the cross for him, and shed his blood for his redemption, earnestly remembering the benefits he hath thereby, and giving him hearty thanks therefore, he doth eat and drink the body and blood of our Saviour Christ profitably to his soul's health, although he doth not receive the sacrament with his mouth." "In the time of the plague, sweat, or such other like contagious times of sickness or diseases, when none of the parish or neighbours can be gotten to communicate with the sick in their houses, for fear of the infection, upon special request of the deceased, the minister may only communicate with him."

The entire omission of the office, entitled, "The Communion of the Sick," as in Wesley's Liturgy, is desirable. A rubric might be annexed to the general Communion Service, allowing the private administration of the Lord's Supper, at the discretion of the minister; but only when the infirm, the sick, or dying, earnestly desire it, when they appear to be in a state of mind to partake of

it worthily, and are utterly unable to attend the public and regular administration. The Church of Scotland, and probably most other Protestant Churches, and many individuals even in the Church of England object, under all circumstances, to the private administration of the sacraments. It has been justly observed, that "the Lord's Supper carries evidence of its social nature, even in its name; it is not a solitary, individual act, it is a joint communion. Christ instituted not a sacrifice for the living and the dead, to be administered by the priest standing, entrusted with the awful and mysterious privilege of dispensing Christ's body and blood to the people all meekly kneeling, but a supper, carrying evidence of its social nature even in its name; a joint communion, gathering around the table of thanksgiving the family of faith to do this in remembrance of Jesus, showing forth the Lord's death till he come; and having this blessed assurance that, 'where two or three are gathered together in his name,

there is HE in the midst of them.'” The Church of England, indeed, fully acknowledges that the receiving of the Lord’s Supper is a social as well as a religious act. She calls it, “the communion,” and “the holy communion,” terms which clearly imply association, or congregationalism. In the second and third rubrics, which follow the Communion Office, she directs that “there shall be no celebration of the Lord’s Supper, except there be a convenient number, (three at the least,) to communicate with the priest;” and though in the case of “sick persons not able to come to the church, and yet desirous to receive the communion,” she allows private administration, she requires that the minister, and at least two other persons, shall communicate with the sick person.

There is no injunction, or example, in the Word of God, which sanctions the administering of this ordinance to any person privately, in sickness, at the hour of death, or in any circumstance whatever. Christ,

when he instituted it, addressed the whole company of his disciples then assembled ; and we read, Mark xiv. 23, they all partook. The Apostle Paul, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, enforcing attention to this rite, and due reverence in the celebration of it, considers it wholly as a public ordinance. He addresses those to whom he writes, not as solitary or detached individuals ; but as “the Church of God, at Corinth, them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus.” Only those who are true believers in Christ can properly partake of his supper. They alone can comply with his tender and ever-memorable charge, “Do this in remembrance of me.” They only can remember him, because they only have known him. The faithful and devout participation of this ordinance is one of the ways in which they are distinguished as his friends and followers, and separate themselves from unbelievers. Without faith in the Saviour, and love to him, it is impossible that the partaking of his peculiar ordinance can be pleasing or

acceptable to him, or profitable to the soul of the recipient. If the dying person is not a Christian, the partaking of it cannot make him one ; and if he is a Christian, he neglects no duty in abstaining from it, when he is unable to go to the place where it is rightly administered.

## CHAPTER VII.

### BURIAL SERVICE.

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THE Burial Service, in our Liturgy, consists chiefly of passages from Holy Writ, in reference to the resurrection and eternal felicity of those who die in the Lord. When it is read by a pious minister over the grave of a departed Christian, in the midst of a Christian assembly, it is highly appropriate, and eminently beautiful. This is the only purpose for which it was originally designed, and to which it ought still to be restricted, or else it should undergo some change to render it fit for promiscuous use.

At many funerals,—must we not say, at the majority of them?—the service, particularly in the following passages, is glaringly inconsistent with moral and scriptural truth: “As it hath pleased Almighty God of his great



mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto his glorious body." "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; even so saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labours." "We give thee hearty thanks for that it hath pleased thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world; beseeching thee that it may please thee, of thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect." "The Lord Jesus Christ hath taught us, by his holy Apostle Saint Paul, not to be sorry, as men without hope, for them that sleep in him." 1 Thess. ii. 13. "We meekly beseech thee, that, when we shall depart this life, we may rest in HIM (our Lord Jesus Christ,) as our hope is this our brother doth." With what internal conflict, with what agonising feelings, must the pious and reflecting minister pronounce these words at

the interment of the Infidel or the profligate, the drunkard or the prostitute, convinced that when so applied they are in direct opposition to the Word of God, and utterly at variance with his own preaching and exposition of that Word! He knows that the utterance of them casts a stigma on his character and ministry. To some of his hearers, it makes him appear an hypocritical teacher, a deceiver; in others, it tends to cherish a false hope, beguiling them to their ruin, that death is the final termination of all human sorrow and suffering; and that after death, eternal happiness is the portion of all persons who depart this life, whether they have been just or unjust, believers in Jesus or unbelievers, holy or unholy. The fond notion that all who die, are happy after death, except a very few desperately or abominably wicked persons, is widely spread, and deeply rooted, even among professedly Christian people; and needs to be strongly opposed by all the ministrations and offices of the Church.

Scripture plainly declares, (Galatians

v. 19—21,) that they who are guilty of “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, hatred, wrath, strife, drunkenness, revellings, and such like, shall not inherit the kingdom of God ;” and that (Rev. xxi. 8) “the fearful and unbelieving, murderers and whore-mongers, sorcerers and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.” The faithful minister preaches, and admonishes his people to the same import, and, both publicly and privately, as far as he has opportunity, warns all those who he knows are living in sin, of their guilt and danger. And yet when they die, though evidently unconverted, unrepentant, cut off in the midst of their sins, he is compelled by his Church, and by the law of the land, to pronounce them “blessed.” He would wish to pass no sentence on them ; but to commit them into the hands of the infallible Judge, to whom alone all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid. Vast numbers of our people live in the habitual neglect of public worship,

and in the commission of almost every crime to which opportunity and other circumstances tempt them. The only occasion, except perhaps marriage, on which they attend any church service, is at the funeral of a relative, a friend, or a neighbour. The deceased person may have been, in all respects, like themselves, careless or ignorant of religion, and grossly immoral. Yet they hear the minister pronounce him blessed, reposing "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life ;" and they return to their sinful course, with the comfortable assurance, that whatever they may do in this life, all will be well with them in the end as with the deceased ; they are surely not worse than he was, and they have as good a right to go to heaven as he had.

To show the impropriety in the promiscuous application of the passages in the Burial Service, quoted at the commencement of this chapter, Mr. Riland puts the following supposititious cases ; which are, however, of frequent occurrence in real life. "I hear," says he, (British Liturgy, p. 16,) "that a

notorious drunkard, though in the prime of his days, died suddenly last night, at a public-house. I am shocked by the news, and even the companions of his revelry were stunned for the moment, when he fell convulsed and foaming on the floor. I bury this very individual ; and thank God for his death ; and I remember that ten years ago he described himself, before his confirmation, as one of the elect ; and that in his infancy, I thanked God for his adoption into his family." "If one of my parishioners," (Church Reform, p. 129,) "should be killed this evening in a drunken quarrel, I shall be compelled in a few days verbally to include my own gratitude to God with that of the drunkard's family and friends. But in point of fact, I am astounded at the terrible reality that the man was cut off, in a moment, in the very act of sin ; that he was hurried away from the miseries and guilt of a wicked life, into miseries yet greater ; that he died without the possibility of repentance ; and I found on such a death a prayer that God would complete the number of his elect. If

another parishioner dies what Dr. Young calls a 'slow sudden death,' that is, after a life spent in the decent and decorous idolatry of the world ; and tells me, within twelve hours of his dissolution, that he is conscious of no guilt, and ready for his last reckoning ; or that he has constructed a firm hope of salvation out of his own innocence and merit, mingled with the virtue of his Saviour's sacrifice, I bury this man also with the same expression of gratitude. But my heart tells me while I utter the act of thanksgiving, how much I wished his continuance in this present life, that his day of grace might have been lengthened."

The Rev. William Howels, a highly useful and popular minister, at Long Acre Chapel, in London, was wont to say in the latter years of his life, that he could accept no preferment in the Church while it involved the necessity of reading the burial service, in every case which the law now requires. "Am I," said he to an intimate friend, "to be forced to canonise every rogue who dies in my parish ?" "Then," replied his friend, "why

do not you leave the Establishment?" Because," said he, "God has not left it." May his answer be deeply impressed on the minds of all faithless and wavering ministers of our Church; who, in these days of peculiar trial, difficulty, and danger, instead of endeavouring with all their might, to sustain, to reform, and to purify that Church to which they vowed allegiance and attachment, are seceding from it, leaving it to fall or stand, to be Protestant or Popish, apparently without any concern.

Objection to the Burial Service is not confined to modern times, or to persons inimical to the Established Church of England. In "Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography," (vol. vi. p. 501,) we find the following anecdote: "Dr. Tillotson, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, frankly owning in a sermon, that the Dissenters had some plausible objections against the Common Prayer, Archbishop Sancroft sent for him, to reprimand him. He stood to what he had asserted. The Archbishop asked him which parts of the Common Prayer he meant; he

mentioned the Burial Office ; upon which the Archbishop owned to him, that he was so little satisfied with the office himself, that for that very reason he had never taken a cure of souls."

It is lamentable to find that the prediction of Bishop Hoadly, above a hundred years since, has not yet been fulfilled. "It must be owned, and it is too plain to be denied," says he, in his "Reasonableness of Conformity to the Church of England," p. 113, "that in such cases as of men cut off in the midst of notorious sins, drunkenness, adultery, murder, &c., this office is wholly improper ; and sure we need not doubt but that at length some regard will be had to the repeated desires of many of the best defenders of the Church ; and this ground of objection against it wholly removed."

The order, in our Prayer-book, for the burial of the dead, is evidently designed to convey instruction and consolation to the living, but by a strange perversion of ideas by the bulk of the people, it is considered as affecting the final state of the deceased. The very re-



ceiving of the corpse into the body of the church, is deemed necessary for the repose of the soul ; or, at any rate, as a ceremony of great but undefined importance. In 1832, during the prevalence of the cholera, the order of the General Board of Health, that the bodies of those persons who had died of that disease, should not be carried into the churches for fear of communicating infection, was, in many places, vehemently and even tumultuously opposed. Mr. Riland, in the preface to his "British Liturgy," p. 26, says, "It is now many years since I once, and only once, omitted some expressions in the Burial Service. It was at the grave of a suicide, canonized by a coroner's certificate. A person present on the occasion, complained of my conduct, *because* the soul of the departed was a loser by it. I remember hesitating at the time, as to whether the complainant had really sunk in such depths of ignorance, as to imagine that the dead are benefited by a minister's prayers. But if all doubts on such a point had not previously vanished, it was completely dispelled by the astounding state-

ment of Archbishop Whately ; (‘Errors of Romanism,’ p. 70 ;) ‘I have known a person in speaking of a deceased neighbour, remark how great a comfort it was, to hear the words of the funeral service read over her, because, poor woman, she had been such a bad liver !”

## CHAPTER VIII.

### CATECHISM.

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It is very desirable that children should be taught from the first dawning of reason, the essential truths of the Christian religion, so far as their years will allow. Instruction of an equally simple kind, is often needed for adults, who are unacquainted with, and willing to learn, the tenets of our holy religion. The Catechism of the Church of England, to become available for these important purposes, requires simplification, and much alteration, both in the way of addition and omission; or rather "an entire reconstruction."

It is not calculated to win the attention of children. They may, by dint of close and painful application, learn the words, but they can scarcely be made to understand the

meaning of the far greater part. A very sensible lady used to say, that when she was a child, she learned much by heart, and in various languages ; that whatever she understood, she could learn, and remember, with ease ; that she did not understand the Catechism ; it seemed to her a mere jumble of words, to which she could attach no intelligible meaning ; therefore, she could not learn it, without much labour, and very imperfectly. During a long course of years she was called upon, every Sunday, to take her part in the weekly repetition of it, which she considered a dreary task, a sad interruption of the rest, and ease, and pleasantness of the Sabbath ; and from which she could derive no instruction, no benefit of any kind. "I do not much prize our Church Catechism," says the late Mr. Berridge, "it begins so very ill, calling baptism our new birth ; and making us *thereby* members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Carnal Churchmen fancy they are new-born, because baptized, and quote the Catechism as a proof of it ; and the carnal

clergy preach accordingly, and quote the same authority. The acting as sponsors is become a mere farce, and a gossiping business ; the promising for infants what they cannot engage for themselves, may suit a covenant of works, but not a covenant of grace." "The Church Catechism," says one writer, "is continually augmenting the ranks of Dissent." "It has made Dissenters," says another ; "and I am sure it will make many more. My own belief is, that it awfully contradicts Scripture, and that it notoriously contradicts facts. What must be the effect of teaching children that in baptism, when infants, they were made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven ? Do not the lives and consciences of thousands pronounce that this is not true ?"

The first question and answer in the Catechism appear trivial to persons who are unacquainted with their origin, or who do not consider their bearing on what immediately follows. The question, "Who gave you this name ?" is often put to children who

have no godfathers and godmothers, or who have not even been baptized. And yet they are required to say ; " My godfathers and godmothers, in my baptism ; wherein I was made," &c. ; which, in fact, is making them utter several untruths in the compass of one short sentence. The rubric in the office for the public baptism of infants, directs that " the priest shall take the child into his hands, and shall say to the godfathers and godmothers, ' Name this child ; ' " and one of the sponsors then informs him what the name is. The Bishop of Norwich, (Dr. Stanley) in an address to the clergy of his diocese, in 1839, reproves them for baptizing without sponsors, and says : " This irregular practice renders null and void those questions of the Church Catechism which refer to the name given by sponsors, whom the majority of the children in our parochial schools never had, and to vows and promises which were never made for them ; an inconsistency, which, while it places the clergyman in the painful position of asking questions, the answers to which he knows

must be false, cannot fail to give the children the impression, (if they think at all,) that the words they are taught, are mere forms, with which they have no personal concern."

The first sentence in the answer to the question, "What did your godfathers and godmothers then for you?" is, "They did promise and vow three things in my name," which is not in strict accordance with the formula in the Office for the Public Baptism of Infants. This question being put to a boy, by the clergyman who was examining him in the Catechism, previous to confirmation, the boy answered with great simplicity; "Nought that I know of." Might not most children make the same answer in regard to their sponsors? and would it not generally be more consistent with truth, than the answer which the Catechism requires? At the Annual Meeting of the Sunday-school Union, held in London on the 6th of May, 1847, one of the speakers related the following fact that took place in a country village. The children being assembled for examination

in the Church Catechism, the schoolmaster asked one of the boys, "What did your godfathers and godmothers do for you?" "I never had any," said the boy. "Answer the question, you impertinent fellow!" "I have answered it; I never had any." "Answer the question at your peril." With a tear in his eye, and the spirit of a martyr in his heart, the boy answered, "I dare not lie." He was removed from the class, and severely punished.

The second, fourth, and fifth answers are liable to great and insuperable objection; and justify the severe censure recently passed upon this part of our Catechism, that it is "a tissue of falsehood." For in those answers the person repeating the Catechism, whether he is baptized or unbaptized, whether a believer or an unbeliever, whatever be his character and the state of his mind, even though he practises every species of iniquity which his circumstances will allow, is required to say, "In my baptism, I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. I



heartily thank our heavenly Father, that he hath called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. And I pray unto God to give me his grace, that I may continue in the same unto my life's end. God the Son hath redeemed me, God the Holy Ghost sanctifieth *me, and all the elect people of God.*"

The two long sentences, in answer to the questions, respecting our duty towards God, and towards our neighbour, are doubtless intended to explain and elucidate the Ten Commandments. An exposition is likewise appended to the Lord's Prayer. But all this expository matter is far more difficult to learn and to remember, than the very passages which they are designed to explain. If a child, or any person, were required to point out, clause by clause, the correspondence between the elucidation, and the passages designed to be elucidated, he would assuredly be much at a loss ; for he would find many things in the former, for which he could discover no foundation in the latter. For instance, if he were asked to which of

the Ten Commandments he could refer the duty, to "honour and obey the king, and all that are put in authority under him ; to submit himself to all his governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters ; to order himself lowly and reverently to all his betters ?" He might, indeed, be told that all these duties come under the head of the fifth commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother ;" this information might silence his inquiry ; but it would bring no conviction to his mind. A commentator on the Catechism says, that the words, "to submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters," seem to imply that the clergy are the masters of the people, and entitled to implicit submission.

The latter part of the Catechism, containing the questions and answers respecting the sacraments, was added after the conference at Hampton Court, at the commencement of the reign of James I. The Catechism before that time ended with the exposition of the Lord's Prayer. The addition is to be regretted. It consists almost wholly of

objectionable matter ; on many important points, it is unscriptural, and differs materially from the Articles of the Church of England. In treating of sacraments, it must be observed, and ought to be remembered, that we find neither definition nor description of a sacrament in Scripture. Indeed, the word sacrament does not occur in the Sacred Volume. Its introduction into the formularies of our Church, particularly the Catechism, is to be regretted. It has given rise to much unprofitable controversy, tending to obscure the lustre, to pervert the meaning, and lessen the value, of the two simple, beautiful, (beautiful from their very simplicity,) and divinely appointed ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The Catechism of the Church of England has hitherto been a great obstacle in this country, to the introduction of any plan of national religious instruction. Not only the large body of Protestant Dissenters, but also very many of the best and most conscientious members of our own Church, are unwilling that their children should be taught the

Catechism ; being convinced that great part of it is untrue and unscriptural. A simple, rational, and scriptural catechism, would, no doubt, insure a large increase in the attendance of children on national, Sunday, and other public schools, where the learning and frequent repetition of it are required ; and would facilitate the introduction among the masses of the people, of a uniform system of religious instruction.

## CHAPTER IX.

### CONFIRMATION.

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THE words of vain and sinful assumption which the Bishop uses in the first prayer in the Confirmation Service, are these : " Almighty and everliving God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants by water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins ; strengthen them, we beseech thee, with the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, and daily increase in them thy manifold gifts of grace." These words might easily and properly be changed into prayer for regeneration, forgiveness, and the manifold gifts of grace ; which would be far more suitable to the condition of the multitudes of young persons who, on confirmation days, (days of mirth and festivity rather than of solemn, religious dedica-

tion,) throng our streets and churches ; and who, for the most part, exhibit in their countenances and deportment, at the very time of the administration of the ordinance, as well as afterwards, no indication of the work of grace in the heart.

In the higher ranks of society, confirmation is generally considered as a ceremony, a piece of good breeding, indispensable for all young persons of any respectability, except those whose parents are connected with a Dissenting congregation ; in the lower ranks, confirmation is considered as a kind of sacred charm, or spell, operating in some unknown way for the prevention of evil. By all ranks, it is generally understood that, in order to be confirmed, nothing further is requisite, than to be "of a proper age," and to be able to say the Church Catechism. Indeed, this is in accordance with the preface to the Office of Confirmation ; with the charge to the sponsors, in "the ministration of public baptism of infants ;" and with the rubrics annexed to the Catechism ; all of which, with the Sixty-first Canon, should be

altered, in order to take away the sanction which they give, undesignedly no doubt, to a fatal misunderstanding and profanation of this rite or ordinance.

“Most parochial ministers,” says the Rev. Charles Bridges, ( “ Christian Ministry,” pp. 557, 565, 569,) “in the course of catechetical inquiry, have elicited from their catechumens notions, which, had not familiar intercourse brought them to light, might have been deemed traditionary relics of the dark ages. Some will come for the Bishop’s blessing, with no idea, desire, or expectation of the blessing of God ; others to relieve their sponsors of the burthen of their sins and duties, as if personal responsibility were not coeval with the earliest period of discernment between our right hand and our left hand ; or as if we, who are utterly unable to answer for ourselves, could answer for one another ; or as if any one could answer for us, but HE, who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree. We have also to contend with the gross misconceptions of parents respecting confirmation. It is with them

a respectable Church form, with no meaning, and linked with no obligations. Their children are come to a proper age. It is right that they should receive the Lord's Supper, fit or unfit; and, therefore, as a preliminary, it is decent that they should be confirmed; that is, that they should solemnly promise, in the presence and in the house of God, what they have no desire or intention to perform; and the performance of which, in many cases, would be in direct opposition to their parents' wishes, instructions, and examples." "A compliance with the letter of the mandate, in a majority of instances, gives plausible grounds for the objections of Dissenters; is wholly inconsistent with the spiritual character of our Church; and reduces the ordinance of confirmation to an empty ceremony, productive of no benefit to the persons confirmed, and bearing only the stamp of wilful falsehood, and solemn mockery, insulting to the presence and house of a holy God." "As a mere *ceremony*, nothing can be more unmeaning, or, we may say, more profane, than confirmation."



The Rev. John Clarke, an American clergyman, being present at a confirmation held by an English Bishop, at Gibraltar in 1838,\* observes ; " There were some things connected with the mode of administering the rite, that in my view detracted from its impressiveness. The candidates were not called out in a body to stand around the chancel when the questions were proposed by the Bishop. Only about twenty stood up together. After these had retired, having received the imposition of hands, the chaplains went down the aisles, and opening the pews where the candidates were seated, brought up successive groups. The greater number of those confirmed were children ; whose manifest inattention and thoughtlessness but too plainly showed that they had no realizing sense of the nature of the solemnities in which they were engaged. A group that sat just before me were talking almost the whole time during the service. Had the standard upon which candidates are to be received been true conversion,

\* " Glimpses of the Old World," vol. ii. pp. 59, 60.

evidence of a work of grace in the heart, instead of the attainment of a certain age, and an ability to recite the Catechism, the facts which I have stated could never have occurred."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE COMMINATION.

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**ATTENDANCE** at Church, on week-day mornings, is very unusual, in our time and country ; being irreconcilable with the daily, necessary employments, of professional, commercial, and domestic life. Consequently the Commination being appointed to be used after morning prayers on the first day of Lent, commonly known by its Popish name, Ash-Wednesday, many persons who are in the constant habit of attending church on the Sabbath day, have never heard or read it, nor would they miss it were it wholly expunged from the Prayer-book. In the American Prayer-book, it is wholly omitted ; also in Wesley's edition of the Liturgy. Its entire omission in ours also, is highly desirable. Scarcely any modification can give it

a Christian, a Protestant tone and character.

The opening address, and likewise the close of the first sentence in the exhortation, strongly favour the Romish doctrine respecting the efficacy of penance. The Scriptures of the New Testament do not in the slightest degree authorize us to believe that by any act we can perform, by any penance, (they do not even mention the name,) either open or secret, either imposed by the priest or by ourselves, we can obtain remission of sins. They declare that there is no salvation but in the Lord Jesus Christ, that he alone is the sacrifice and propitiation for our sins, and that it is only by grace we can be saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

In a pamphlet published by the Bishop of Norwich, containing his speech in the House of Lords, May 26, 1840, with copious explanatory notes, he observes in one of the notes: "There is another point in our Liturgy to which I would refer the reader,—

the Commination Service, containing the following passage ; ‘ Brethren, in the primitive church there was a godly discipline, that, at the beginning of Lent, such persons as stood convicted of notorious sins, were put to *open penance* and *punished in this world*, that their *souls might be saved in the day of the Lord*. Instead whereof, until the *said discipline may be restored again, which is much to be wished,*’ &c. What this godly discipline is, Gratian, (as quoted by Wheatley on Common Prayer, p. 222,) tells us, namely, on the first day of Lent, the penitents, clad in sackcloth, with naked feet, &c., were introduced into the church ; where the Bishop, and the rest of the clergy, after repeating the seven penitential psalms, threw ashes upon them ; and then by command of the Bishop, they were turned out of the church ; all the clergy following after them, repeating the curse upon Adam, ‘ in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread.’ The like penance was inflicted upon them on the following Sunday. Is there, I would ask, a clergyman who deliberately wishes for

a restoration of such discipline ? And as to the doctrine inculcated, will it, or ought it, to find a single advocate amongst the members, lay or clerical, of the Church of England, professing a reformed faith ? Is there any clergyman who will come forward to sanction the doctrine that our souls by penance in this world may be saved ? On calm consideration, I am persuaded that every sincere friend of Protestantism must be earnestly desirous of purifying his Church from every such relic of Popery in the letter, as much as the common sense and feeling of the times have already done in spirit."

The damnatory clauses in the Athanasian Creed are highly objectionable ; but is not the cursing in this service still more so ? When the creed is repeated, the general concurrence of the assembled people is implied ; but in the Communion, the part which they are required to take in the awful work of cursing, is more prominent, more formal and absolute, than even with regard to the creed.

## CHAPTER XI.

### HOMILIES.

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THE chief objections to the Homilies, in their present state, may be ranged under the following heads :—

1. Erroneous statements.

We learn from Scripture, (1 Sam. xxxi. 4, and 1 Chron. x. 4,) that Saul killed himself ; but the Homilies, (p. 122, also 622,) by a strange oversight, ascribe his death to the young Amalekite, who brought tidings of it to David.

“ Fasting thus used with prayer is of great efficacy, and weigheth much with God. So the angel Raphael told Tobias, (Tobit xii.) (P. 317.)” When we turn to the book of Tobit, (xii. 8,) we find that the words ascribed to the reputed angel are simply :

"Prayer is good with fasting, and alms, and righteousness."

"The First Part of the Sermon against Peril of Idolatry," tells us, p. 201, that "the face of subtle Satan is horrible and ugly." Scripture declares that he appears like an angel of light.

At p. 326, Judith is called "that silly woman;" at p. 344, "that holy woman."

At pp. 244 and 253, the mother of Jesus is called "our lady;" at p. 626, "the blessed Virgin Mary;" at p. 627, "the blessed Virgin, this most noble and virtuous lady." Do not Protestants make a great concession to the Church of Rome, and acknowledge her perpetual virginity, notwithstanding the assurance to the contrary in Matthew i. 25? Both in that verse and in Luke ii. 7, Jesus is called "her first-born son." Do not these words clearly show that she had afterwards other sons, or at least, one more son? And we read of his "brethren." Do we say, the first-born or eldest son of any family, in which there is only one son?



Scripture is called "the *best part* which Mary did choose, Luke x., John vi." (P. 3.) We must remember that when Mary chose the good part, the Scriptures of the New Testament were not written. The following is doubtless the passage to which the homilist means to allude, (Luke x. 42,) but which he strangely misapplies: "One thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." In John vi., to which reference is also given, no mention is made of Mary.

In the "Second Part of the Homily on the reading of Holy Scripture," we are told at p. 8 that "presumption and arrogancy are the mother of all error;" and at p. 7 that "ignorance of God's word is the cause of all error." In proof of the last assertion we have this addition,— "as Christ himself affirmed to the Sadducees, saying that they erred, because they knew not the Scriptures (Matt. xxii. v. 29)." We read, indeed, v. 29, that he said to them, when answering the question which they had put to him; "Ye do err, not know-

ing the Scripture ;" but his words evidently referred only to the particular point respecting which they had interrogated him.

In "the Second Part of the Sermon of Alms-deeds," the writer says, p. 424 : " Both he (Jesus) and his disciples were grievously accused of the Pharisees, to have defiled their souls in breaking the constitutions of the elders, because they went to meat, and washed not their hands before, according to the custom of the Jews, Luke xi." In that chapter, (v. 38,) the statement is merely, "The Pharisees marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner."

"Our Saviour Christ sware divers times, saying, 'Verily, verily.' (John iii. 11., p. 76.) Surely, the repetition of the word, "verily," does not, cannot, constitute an oath. (See Matthew xi. 27.)

"He was seen of more than five hundred brethren in the Mount of Galilee, 1 Cor. xv. ; where Jesus appointed them to be by his angel, when he said, 'Behold, he shall go before you into Galilee ; there shall ye see him, as he hath said unto you'. (Acts, p. 476.)"

The inaccuracy of this short statement will be evident, if we turn to 1 Cor. xv. 6, (in which neither Galilee, nor any other place, is mentioned,) to Matt. xxviii. 7, 10 ; Mark xvi. 7 ; Luke xxiv. 9. There is no foundation for it in Acts i., to which the homilist refers us.

"In old time, (when was that time ?) every man did their own duty and office, and was not busy to require the duty of their neighbours."—P. 559.

"The old primitive church was most in-corrupt and pure," pp. 187, 239, 202 ; "most pure and sincere," p. 239 ; "most holy and godly," p. 183 ; "next the apostolic, most pure," p. 220. "Unto the time of Constantine, by the space of three hundred years after our Saviour Christ, the Christian religion was most pure and indeed golden."—P. 276.

"In Theodosius the Emperor's time, about three hundred and ninety years after our Saviour Christ's ascension" (p. 205), "religion was most pure, and nothing so corrupt as it hath been of late days." (p. 183.) "About

four hundred years after our Saviour Christ, the Church of Christ was much less corrupt and more pure than now it is," p. 207. These statements respecting the Primitive Church are inconsistent with the testimony of history, and even of those very writers, those "godly bishops and learned doctors," who are so frequently and so reverentially quoted in the Homilies. From these writers, particularly Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Augustine, it appears plainly that in their time, that is, within the homilists' "golden" and "most pure" era, many unscriptural tenets and superstitious practices were prevalent, such as reverence of relics, invocation of saints and martyrs, worship of images, excessive "decking of churches," prayers for the dead, miraculous property of the eucharistic elements, supremacy of the Bishop of Rome, the propitiatory virtue of penance, fasting, and of almsgiving. Nay, not a few even of the quotations themselves strongly imply this fact. To notice only the brief quotations from Augustine, in "the Second Part of the Sermon against Peril of Idolatry"

(p. 209), they are conclusive on this head. If we take these several quotations from Augustine, just as they stand, and without reference to the places whence they are taken, we must first note the historical facts which they either affirm, or clearly imply, that, in his time, there were, what he says there ought not to be, temples and churches dedicated to martyrs and saints; that many called Christians worshipped tombs and pictures; that the festivals of the dead were often celebrated with riot and intemperance; that images in churches were not unknown; that they were actually worshipped there; and that this idolatry had already ripened its natural fruits, producing "the most vile affection of error." But if the professedly Christian community had fallen into a condition of flagrant idolatry, then we pointedly ask, what becomes of the allegation, that these times were "the most pure and holy?" Surely, such a state of things must have been the consequence of a previous falling away. Even in the apostolic times, we read in Scripture of sad errors, sad declensions from purity of faith

and morals, in the churches of Corinth, of Galatia, of Thyatira, and others, and among individuals. The Apostle Paul, to the Gentiles, testifies, (2 Thess. ii. 7,) "The mystery of iniquity doth already work." And the Evangelist John, (1 Epistle iv. 1, 3,) confirms the report, that "many false prophets are gone out into the world, and that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world."—ver. 3.

A little further on in the same homily (p. 208), we are told on the authority of Ambrose, in his treatise on the death of Theodosius the Emperor, that the Empress Helene found the cross, the real cross on which Christ was crucified, and the title on it. Mr. Taylor, in the "General Supplement to his Ancient Christianity" (p. 19), justly remarks, "The homilist refers to the much-noised 'Invention of the Cross,' in terms implying, we must grant, if not affirming, his belief in the reality of that absurd fraud. But such an acquiescence in an imposture which had so long, and so extensively, gained credence,

is not to be much wondered at, in the case of the Reformers. And yet, had they allowed themselves to consider the circumstance of the evidence as presented in this very instance, and as reported by Ambrose himself, minds so vigorous could hardly have failed to break through the tissue of lies. But they were not accustomed, it is clear, thus to scrutinize the evidence, or the opinions of the fathers; they admitted as true whatever they had been taught to think so; except only in cases where the decisive evidence of Scripture compelled them to reject it. The instance is not even reported with strict accuracy. What St. Ambrose says, is, that 'Helene found the cross, and, after a search, found also the title.'"

At page 223 of the same homily, we have another legendary tale from Eutropius and others, given apparently with the same implicit credulity:—"In this history, joined to Eutropius, it is written that the sun was darkened by the space of seventeen days most strangely and dreadfully, and that all men said, that for the horribleness of that

cruel and unnatural fact of Irene, and the putting out of the emperor's eyes, the sun had lost his light. But, indeed, God would signify, by the darkness of the sun, into what darkness and blindness of ignorance and idolatry all Christendom should fall by the occasion of images."

2. Inapplicability to the present times.

It is difficult to ascertain precisely at what time the Homilies were written. The first part, as appears plainly from the preface, (published in 1562,) was "set forth in the reign of Edward VI.;" the second and larger part, as the title-page annexed to it informs us, was "set out by authority of Queen Elizabeth:" and both these parts form, as the general title-page indicates, the book of "Sermons or Homilies appointed to be read in churches in the time of Queen Elizabeth of famous memory." The sermon against "Wilful Rebellion," laments (p. 614) the early removal of our "good Josias, King Edward." The same sermon (p. 616) says, "Shall not we pray for the long, prosperous, and godly reign of our natural prince,—



our most merciful, most loving sovereign, the preserver of us and our country in so long peace, quietness, and security ;" at p. 617, speaks of rebellion raised against this gracious sovereign ; at p. 645, of his "most honourable counsellors, by the experiment of so many years proved honourable to his majesty, and most profitable and beneficial unto our country ;" at p. 662 of "King Henry the Eighth's days and King Edward the Sixth, and our gracious Sovereign's days that now is, where neither the Pope's curses, nor God's manifold blessings, are wanting." At the close of the sixth part of this sermon, (p. 667,) as of all the preceding parts, prayer is offered up for "our sovereign lord the king, and all the people committed to his charge ;" and yet at p. 669 the thanksgiving for the suppression of the last rebellion, says, (p. 669,) "Thou hast by thy assistance given the victory to thy servant our queen, her true nobility, and faithful subjects."

The Homilies on Obedience and on Wilful Rebellion, strongly inculcate the doctrine of

passive submission and non-resistance to kings and all in authority. The general tenor of these sermons is such as might be expected from the age and circumstances in which they were written ; but it is irreconcilable with the spirit of the times in which we live ; with the nature of the Government which is now established by law in our country ; and more especially with the principles which placed the present Royal Family on the throne of Great Britain.

In "the Sermon against Peril of Idolatry," the following and many other sentences, inapplicable to present times, occur : " You hear of our Lady of Walsingham, our Lady of Ipswich, our Lady of Wilsdon, and such other."—P. 244. " We fall down before every cross piece of timber."—P. 209. " The relics, we must kiss and offer unto, especially on relic Sunday."—P. 254. " Our churches stand full of great puppets, wondrously decked and adorned."—P. 285. " Neither do beasts nor cattle lack their gods with us : for St. Loy is the horseleech, and St. Anthony the swineherd," &c.—P. 245. " In our time,

and here in our country, every shire should scarcely have one good preacher, if they were divided.”—P. 259.

“Above thirty years past, the great Turk had overrun, conquered, and brought into his dominion and subjection twenty Christian kingdoms. And now this great Turk, this bitter and sharp scourge of God’s vengeance, is even at hand in this part of Christendom, in Europe, at the borders of Italy, at the borders of Germany, greedily gaping to devour us, to overrun our country, to destroy our churches also, unless we repent our sinful life, and resort more diligently to the Church.”—P. 380. “The Turks do hang over all our heads, to the utter danger of all Christendom.”—P. 228.

### 3. Unscriptural doctrine.

“The second part of the Sermon of Salvation,” (p. 29,) speaks of “remission of our original sin in baptism.” The Ninth Article defines original sin to be “the fault and corruption of the nature of every man.” The homily teaches that this sin, this corruption, is removed, remitted by baptism.

"We be washed in our baptism from the filthiness of sin."—P. 453.

In "the Second Part of the Sermon of Salvation," the word "baptized" is used as synonymous with "justified." The passage is,—“Our office is, not to pass the time of this present life unfruitfully and idly, after that we are baptized or justified.”—P. 32.

At p. 314, baptism is called "the sacrament of our regeneration or new birth."

"By holy promises, with calling the name of God to witness, we be made lively members of Christ, when we profess his religion, receiving the sacrament of baptism."—P. 78.

In the notice at the end of the first part of the Homilies, p. 161, we find these words,—“Of the due receiving of his [Christ's] blessed body and blood under the forms of bread and wine.” “If we do not, with earnest repentance, cleanse the filthy stomach of our soul, we shall eat this wholesome bread, and drink this cup, to our eternal destruction.”—P. 499.

"We shall be the more ready to receive our Saviour and Maker in his blessed sacrament."—P. 158.

“Let us be favourable one to another, and pray we one for another, that we may be healed from all frailties of our life, the less to offend one the other ; and that we may be of one mind and one spirit, agreeing together in brotherly love and concord, even like the dear children of God. (Eph. v.) By these means shall we move God to be merciful unto our sins, yea, and we shall be hereafter the more ready to receive our Saviour and Maker in his blessed sacrament.”—P. 458.

“In the supper of the Lord there is no untrue figure of a thing absent. The ancient Catholic fathers were not afraid to call this supper, some of them, the salve of immortality and sovereign preservation against death ; other, a deifical communion ; other, the sweet dainties of our Saviour, the pledge of eternal health, the defence of faith, the hope of the resurrection ; other, the food of immortality, the healthful grace, and the conservatory to everlasting life.”—P.491.

In “the Sermon of Alms-deeds,” we read, p. 421, that “Most true is that saying which St. Augustine hath, that the giving of alms

and relieving of the poor is the right way to heaven."

In the same sermon, p. 425, we are assured from Tobit iv. 10, that "mercifulness and almsgiving purgeth from all sins, and delivereth from death, and suffereth not the soul to come into darkness;" from Ecclesiasticus iii. 30, "As water quencheth burning fire, even so mercy and alms resisteth and reconcileth sins;" our version is, "alms maketh an atonement for sins;" from "the holy father Cyprian, how wholesome and profitable it is to relieve the needy, and help the afflicted, by the which we may purge our sins, and heal our wounded souls;" and by the homilist himself, that "a great confidence may they have before the high God, that show mercy and compassion to them that are afflicted. And sure it is, that mercifulness quaileth the heat of sin so much, that they shall not take hold upon man to hurt him; or if ye have by any infirmity or weakness been touched and annoyed with them, straightways shall mercifulness wipe and wash them away as salves and remedies to heal their sores and grievous diseases."

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